

FIRE APPARATUS AXLE WEIGHT EXEMPTION INITIAL STATEMENT OF REASONS

CCR SECTION 1411.7. "FIRE APPARATUS"

SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF THE REGULATION

The proposed regulation will increase the current axle weight exemptions for fire trucks and the current legal length of single-unit fire trucks. It will also change the term “fire trucks” to “fire apparatus” throughout the section, and define “fire apparatus” to include all emergency vehicles, such as vehicles for hazardous materials response, search and rescue, etc.

NECESSITY

In 1992, California Vehicle Code (CVC) section 35002 and California Code of Regulations (CCR) title 21 were amended to include axle weight exemptions for fire trucks, personnel allowances, and a definition of “fire apparatus,” as supported by the California Fire Chief’s Association. As a result, fire trucks may comply with the “applicable permit requirements” adopted by the California Department of Transportation (Department). The current fire truck axle weight exemptions are found in section CCR 1411.7.

The fire service industry is requesting an increase in the current fire truck axle weight exemptions, an increase in the current single-unit fire truck length, and an expansion of the definition of “fire apparatus,” to remedy the following problems:

1. **Non-Compliant Fire Truck:** According to industry, a certain fire truck model does not fit into the existing categories of exempted vehicles. One of its axle weights exceeds that allowed in the CCRs. This model is a common fire truck now operating throughout California. Also, many single-unit fire truck models exceed the allowable length per the CVC.
2. **Emergency Vehicles:** The existing exemptions apply to fire trucks only; they do not apply to other emergency vehicles, such as vehicles for hazardous materials response and search and rescue. There has been a greater need for emergency response preparedness of all types since September 11, 2001.
3. **Grants for Fire Apparatus Vehicles:** Grants are available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for these non-fire truck emergency vehicles (see www.firegrantsupport.com). However, according to the California fire fighting industry, California-compliant vehicles cost more because they must be manufactured at lower weights than the national standard vehicles. Therefore, California must apply for larger amounts when competing with other states for FEMA funding, which puts California fire departments at a disadvantage.

The proposed changes to CCR section 1411.7 would increase the allowed axle weights for all fire apparatus and the allowed length for single-unit fire apparatus vehicles. The proposed changes would also include all emergency vehicles and make California more competitive when applying for fire apparatus grants.

TECHNICAL, THEORETICAL, AND/OR EMPIRICAL STUDY, REPORTS, OR DOCUMENTS

The Department's Pavement Program provided technical data on pavement deterioration related to axle weights. However, pavement deterioration depends on multiple trips of overweight vehicles. Since fire apparatus vehicles are used occasionally, the Pavement Program staff deferred its decision to the Department's Structure Design Program for consideration of bridge capacity.

The Maintenance Division's Structural Design and Analysis section requested the fire apparatus axle weights not exceed the axle weight limits in the purple weight chart of the Permits Program (the maximum permit loads). The proposed weight exemptions would not exceed the Department's Permit Program for purple weights. In addition, no fire apparatus may travel on a bridge where the weight of the fire apparatus exceeds the posted maximum bridge weight.

Computer models were run on the longer fire apparatus vehicles to determine tracking performance. Provided that the wheelbase and front overhang used do not exceed those on fire trucks that are currently being manufactured, the tracking performance was similar to vehicles that are currently legal throughout California.

REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE REGULATION AND THE AGENCY'S REASONS FOR REJECTING THOSE ALTERNATIVES

No other alternatives were presented to or considered by the Department. The current weight exemptions are in the CCR. The current length limits are in the CVC.

REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED REGULATORY ACTION THAT WOULD LESSEN ANY ADVERSE IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

The Department has not identified any adverse impact on small businesses.

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON ANY BUSINESS

Fire apparatus is purchased primarily by local governments. Fire agencies would have the option of purchasing new vehicles, but would not be required to do so. Fire apparatus manufacturers may have an economic benefit as more vehicles are purchased with the higher weights.